

Working on the “Frontline” of Education



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Full day Kindergarten working
and learning conditions survey

2018

BCTF Research—BC Primary Teachers' Association



British Columbia Teachers' Federation
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Working on the “Frontline” of Education

As over 39,000 Kindergarten students entered British Columbia’s public schools last year, a welcoming team of approximately 2,600 K and K-1 teachers was there to help them begin their learning journeys.

For many BC families, this event also marked their first direct engagement with BC’s public school system and curriculum. Working at this critical gateway to public education carries tremendous educational responsibility. Enacting rich and inclusive learning opportunities and supporting their students’ diverse developmental needs demands K/K-1 teachers possess extensive teaching skills and pedagogical judgment, classroom resources, physical and emotional energy, and cultural and systems knowledges.

In Spring 2018—almost a decade into province-wide implementation of Full-day Kindergarten—the BCTF Research Department and BC Primary Teachers’ Association investigated who our K/K-1 teachers are, how they teach and learn, and whether they have the resources and supports needed to effectively carry out their professional work. The following pages present highlights from the *BCTF/BCPTA 2018 Full day Kindergarten Working and Learning Conditions Survey*.

With a response rate of almost 50% of current K/K-1 teachers in the province, the survey provides a reliable snapshot of K/K-1 teachers’ classroom spaces and teaching approaches, professional learning experiences, and advice for creating better learning and working conditions for themselves and their students.

Welcome to the “frontline” of public education.

Did you know?...

BC's K/K-1 teachers



Women

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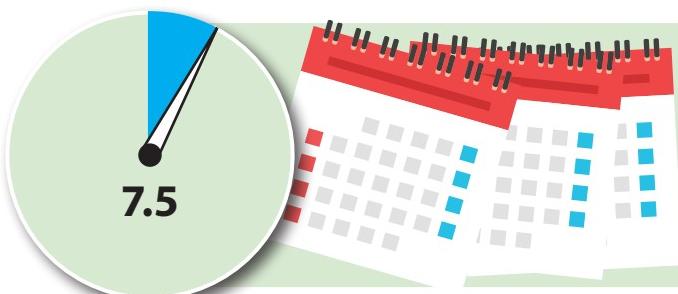
**Less than five years
K/K-1 experience**

© Image source: iStock.com/Lesia_G



**Purchase or develop
their own teaching
resources**

© Image source: iStock.com/roopcreative



**Average hours per
week worked outside
of school day**

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* based on 1316 survey responses; 49.6% respondent rate.

K/K-1 Teachers Say...

"The classroom is not large enough to accommodate a play-based, materials-based kindergarten program where kids need room for centres and exploratory play."

"Our custodian is phenomenal yet there are a lot of little hands and germs and a ton of materials that get used daily—how do we make sure these are getting clean as well?"

"I have been teaching K for almost 30 years. The gradual entry time needs to be increased over the month of September in order for all students to have a successful introduction to their journey called School. Some kids are more ready than others."

"It is a time to gently bring students into the room in order to get to know them, build their trust, provide a relaxed and comfortable environment, and meet individually with their new teacher as well as a small group of peers with whom they can interact."

Classroom Space and Facilities

Overall, the majority of respondents indicate they find their classroom spaces and facilities adequate. Teachers who spoke favourably of their classroom conditions cited proximity to well-maintained bathrooms, access to hot water and sinks, sufficient natural light and windows, sufficient space for sensory/quiet areas, storage for children's belongings, teaching materials and equipment, and electrical connections for learning devices.

When teachers described inadequate classroom space and facilities, the most prevalent issues were:

- *Lack of cleanliness*
- *Inadequate physical space*
- *Insufficient classroom furniture and hardware*
- *Inadequate quiet areas*
- *Inappropriate classroom size*

Preparation Time

Full time K/K-1 teachers indicate they typically perform a weekly average of 7.5 hours of preparation in addition to scheduled preparation time.

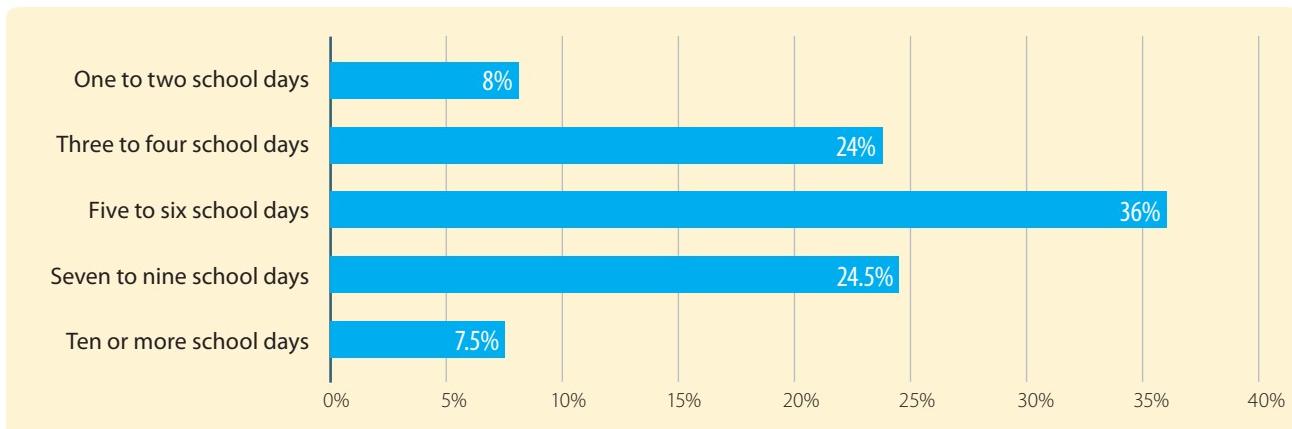
Pedagogical Practices

K/K-1 teachers report, that in addition to recess and lunch their students spend an additional 43 minutes per day out-of-doors during instructional time.

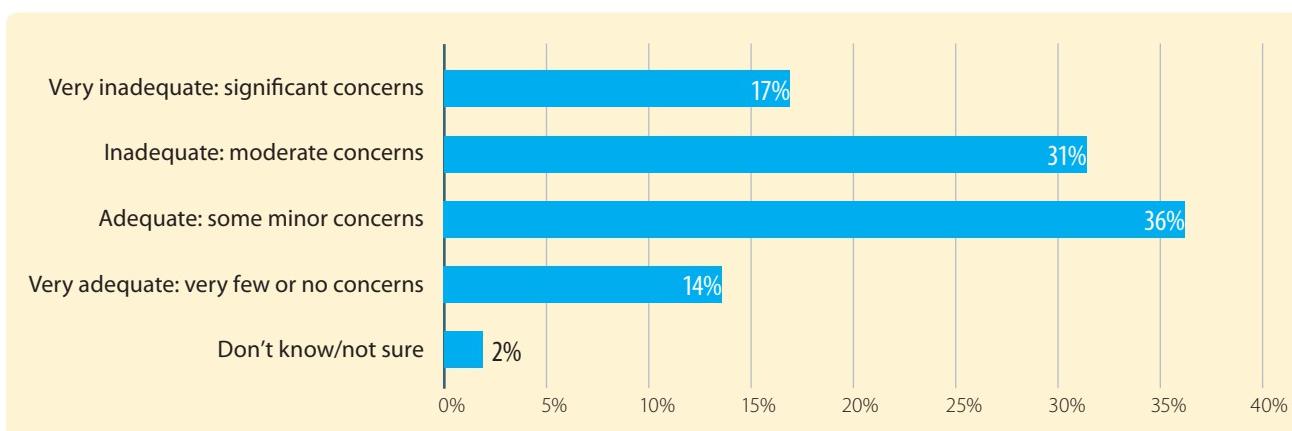
Gradual Entry

Teachers indicate a longer Gradual Entry period would enable students to acclimatize to school, especially those without previous educational and social experience (e.g. in daycare or preschools), or those with possible developmental challenges.

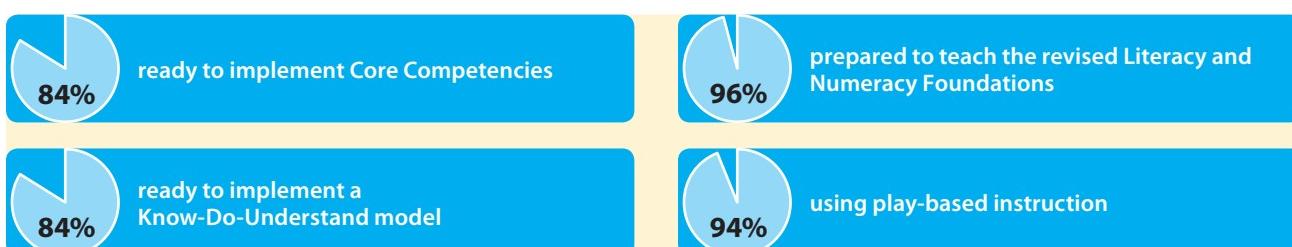
How long is the typical gradual entry period?



Is your gradual entry time frame adequate for the majority of your students?



Are you ready to implement the Revised K/K-1 Curriculum?



K/K-1 Teachers Say...

"I value this and believe it is important, but resources are limited and there has not been enough in-service or meaningful pro-d to help support me."

"I believe there is not sufficient access to materials in French in order to integrate Aboriginal perspectives and to engage the students with activities or learning experiences."

"I have support from a wonderful Ab Ed person in our school... plus a supportive and helpful staff at the aboriginal resources lending library."

Aboriginal Perspectives

Survey findings indicate that engagement with Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge is a significant challenge for the majority BC Kindergarten teachers. Overall, K/K-1 teachers expressed interest, willingness and commitment to integrating Aboriginal perspectives and curriculum content in their K/K-1 classrooms. However, many described numerous concerns that contributed to their inability to effectively address learning outcomes related to Aboriginal perspectives in the K/K-1 curriculum.

Access to Support Staff & Aboriginal Community

- Limited or no availability of Aboriginal support staff
- Heavy caseload and demand of Aboriginal support staff resulting in infrequent or sparse classroom support
- Difficulty scheduling district presentations, school visits, and collaborative planning time

Resources

- Inadequate provision of age appropriate K-1 level resources
- Inadequate materials available in French language
- Unreasonable amount of personal time and funds spent acquiring professional resources and classroom materials
- Lack of school and district funding and guidelines for resource acquisition
- Concern about acquiring culturally appropriate and pedagogically sound resources when left on one's own
- Hard to book high demand district-level materials in a timely way for a sufficient borrowing period

Professional Development

- Unavailability of relevant and sustained professional development and in-service
- Competing PD priorities against other areas of new curriculum implementation
- Lack of time and funds to access professional development opportunities when offered

K/1 Split Classes

K/K-1 teachers hold diverse perspectives on the benefits and challenges of the K/1 split class structure.

According to respondents, K/1 split class concerns include:

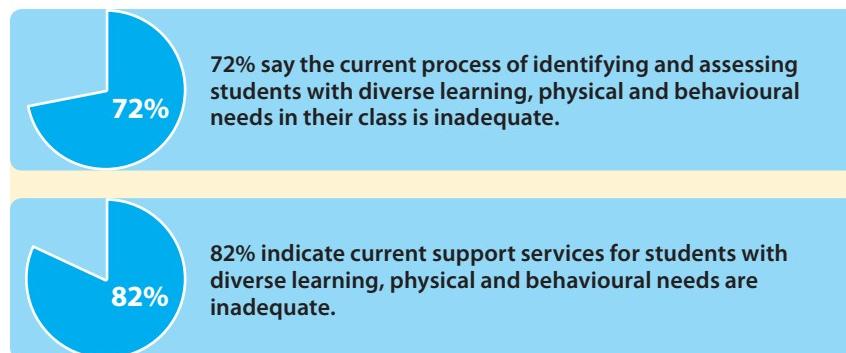
- *developmental inappropriateness*
- *incongruent instructional priorities*
- *less effective gradual entry process*

K/K-1 Teachers Say...

"The gap between the grades and the ages of the children is so huge I can't meet all the needs of my class."

"The K/1 split allows grade 1's to mentor and teach kindergarteners the rules and expectations making the beginning of the year much easier for everyone."

Inclusive Education



Teaching Resources

A significant number of respondents indicate they rely, to a large extent, on professional and classroom materials that they develop or purchase on their own time, with their own personal income, or through fundraising and donations.

Most acquire their resources:

- By developing materials themselves
- Purchasing them with their own income
- Searching free websites or on-line portals for suitable materials

Least utilized resource providers:

- TeachBC website
- Resource-specific publications by PSAs, Steering Committees and other bodies (e.g. ERAC)
- BCTF workshops

K/K-1 Teachers Say...

"I am resource poor. The school I am currently at only has enough resources for one kindergarten class... I do my best with what I have."

"Probably 90% of the materials that are on my classroom are my own that I have either purchased at garage sales, given to by friends, by parents and our very generous PAC."

"For toys and books, I only have adequate because of the amount I purchased out of my own money. After the first amount of money to start all day K, there has been very little given."

"Lack of current technology equipment and educational toys and games due to lack of funding for purchases. I make a lot of the math and literacy games for the students and pay for new toys with my own money."

"In order to run the program I feel passionate about, I buy extra materials almost weekly."

"I can't afford to pay for all that we need so our classroom is still missing a lot of these items."

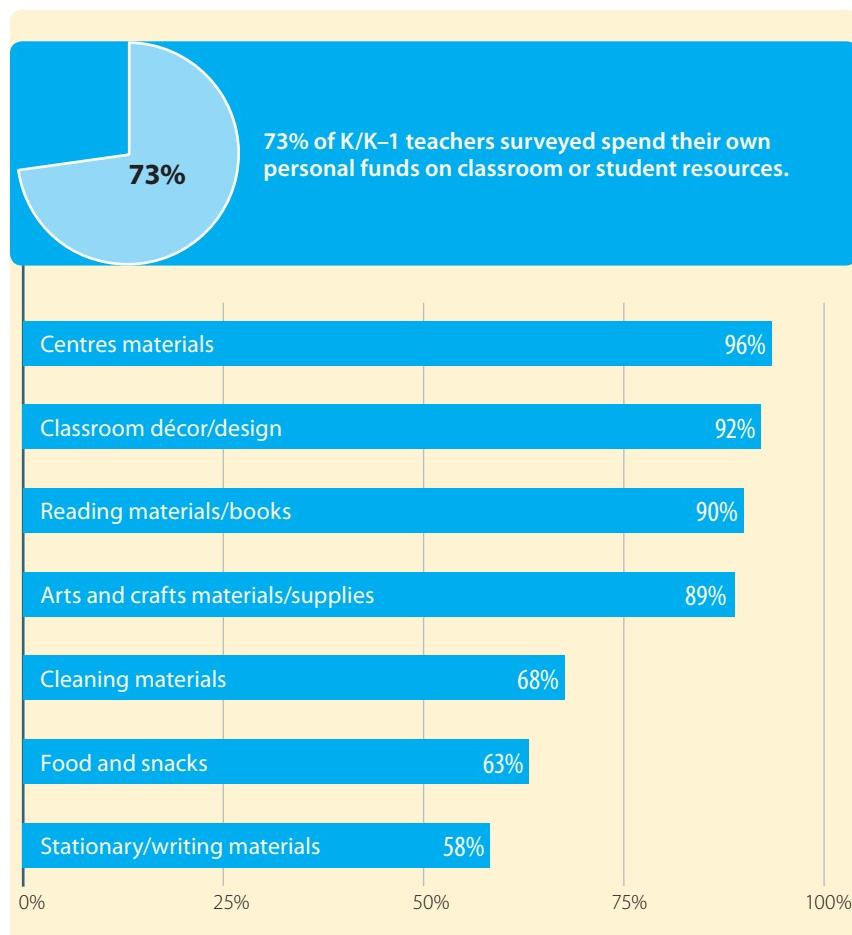
In order to teach their program, survey respondents indicate they had the most adequate access to:

- School library/ learning commons and books
- Art materials and easels
- Appropriate toys and games

The least available resources to K/K-1 teachers are:

- Cooking supplies and equipment
- Teacher/ professional library
- Musical instruments

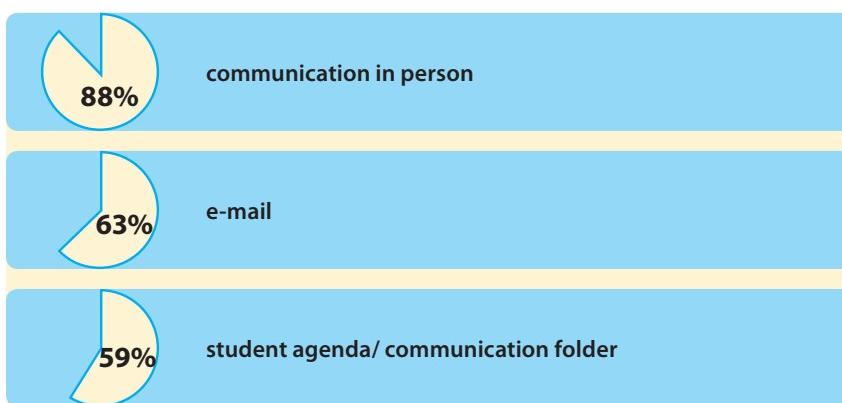
Funding



Parents/Guardians

When communicating with parents/guardians of their students, the majority of respondents indicate that in-person and email communication are their two most frequent means of interaction, while digital tools such as class websites, applications (e.g. Remind), and reporting platforms (e.g. Freshgrade and MyEdBC) are also used, but less prevalently.

Survey findings reveal limited parental/guardian involvement or engagement in other school-based activities such as field trip supervision, fundraising, classroom activities, and parent information groups/ sessions.



Professional Learning

75% of teachers K/K–1 indicate they would like to participate in more professional learning opportunities than they are currently able.

K/K–1 Teachers Say...

"It would be great to have mentorship programs more readily available and more funded professional learning opportunities."

"I am constantly growing as an individual and teacher."

Respondents participated in....



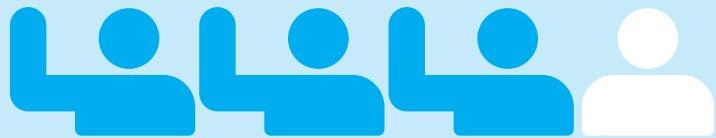
K/K-1 Teachers Say...

"Kids and teachers deserve much better learning and working conditions."

Priorities for Improvement

When asked what changes would most improve their current teaching situation respondents chose:

- Class composition changes (#1)
- Class size improvements (#2)
- Reducing wait times for access to psychoeducational testing (#3)
- Improved specialist teacher staffing (#4)



3 out of 4 top priorities call for more supports for kids!

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Last Word

"Despite all the challenges I still think it is the most rewarding grade to teach and I love seeing the eager faces every morning!"

"Teaching Kindergarten is a great joy. It is a privilege to welcome children into school."



"I love teaching Kindergarten, but..."

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Teachers' Mental Health and Burnout

K/K-1 teachers described both the professional rewards and difficulties of their role. They love their work, and value their unique positioning as students' and families' first connection with the BC public school system. However, many also point to the physical and emotional toll that teaching BC's youngest learners takes on their wellness, due to a wide range of systemic conditions that are making their job increasingly complex and unsustainable.

Notes

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